

Claims:

1. A container for use in sterilizing an object, the container adapted to receive the object, the container having a first end having an opening to allow positioning of the object in the container, a second end located generally opposite the first end and wherein at least a portion of the container is adapted to be collapsed or deformed whereby the first end and the second end are moved relatively towards each other.
2. A container as claimed in claim 1 further comprising closure means for closing the opening in the first end, said closure means including a vapour permeable portion.
3. A container as claimed in claim 2 wherein the closure means comprises a vapour permeable closure for affixing to a rim of the opening.
4. A container as claimed in claim 3 wherein the vapour permeable closure comprises a peel paper or a vapour permeable membrane.
5. A container as claimed in claim 2 wherein the closure means comprises a lid or cap having a vapour permeable portion.
6. A container as claimed in claim 5 wherein the lid or cap comprises an annular member having a flange depending therefrom, said flange having interengaging means for engaging with corresponding interengaging means on the container to thereby hold the lid or cap on the container, and a vapour permeable member spanning an opening in the annular member.

A container as claimed in claim 5 or claim 6 wherein the lid or cap is a tamper-proof or tamper-evident lid or cap.

8. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the collapsible or deformable portion comprises a fluted or corrugated portion.

5 9. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the container is relatively enlarged at the first end.

10. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the second end of the container comprises a closed end.

10 11. A container as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 9 wherein the second end is closed by a vapour permeable means.

15 12. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the collapsible or deformable portion is produced from a relatively rigid material.

13. A container as claimed in any one the preceding claims comprising a first portion and a second portion joined together to form the container.

20 14. A container as claimed in claim 13 wherein the first portion includes the deformable or collapsible portion.

15. A container as claimed in claim 13 wherein the second portion includes the deformable or collapsible portion.

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16. A container as claimed in claim 13 wherein the first portion and the second portion each contain a deformable or collapsible portion.

17. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims for use in sterilizing an endoscopic telescope comprising an elongated part for

receiving a barrel of an endoscopic telescope and an enlarged part depending from the elongated part.

18. A container as claimed in claim 17 wherein the elongated part includes the collapsible or deformed portion.

19. A container as claimed in claim 17 or claim 18 comprising a first part and a second, elongated part joined to the first part, the first part being of relatively enlarged diameter with respect to the elongated part.

20. A container as claimed in claim 19 wherein the first part includes an outwardly projecting part that fits relatively snugly with the second, elongated part such that the outwardly projecting part of the first part overlaps with at least some of the second, elongated part.

21. A container as claimed in claim 20 wherein the second part has an open end for receiving the outwardly extending part of the first part and a closed end, said closed end comprising the second end of the container.

22. A container as claimed in claim 20 or claim 21 wherein the first part has an open end in the outwardly extending part through which a barrel of an endoscopic telescope can pass and a large opening in the enlarged diameter portion.

23. A container for use in sterilizing an object, the container adapted to receive the object, the container having an internal volume for receiving the object and an opening through which the object can be inserted into the container, characterized in that the container is adapted to be separated into at least two parts to thereby expose the object.

24. A container as claimed in claim 23 in which the container has a first end and a second end and a portion of the container between the first and second ends is adapted to be breakable to thereby enable separation of the container into at least two parts.

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25. A container as claimed in claim 24 wherein the breakable portion comprises one or more lines of weaknesses or a portion made of a low-breaking point material.

26. A container as claimed in any one of claims 23 to 25 wherein the container is provided with a closure means.

27. A container as claimed in claim 26 wherein the closure means is a tamper proof or tamper evident closure

28. A container as claimed in any one of claims 23 to 26 wherein the container has a vapour permeable portion.

29. A container as claimed in claim 26 or 27 wherein the closure means includes a vapour permeable portion.

30. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims further comprising a sheet-like material adapted to drape over the object upon removal of the object.

31. A container as claimed in claim 30 wherein the sheet-like material is mounted to the inside of the container.

32. A container as claimed in claim 30 wherein the sheet-like material is mounted to a closure means.

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33. A container as claimed in any one of claims 30 to 32 wherein the sheet-like material is a sheet of gauze or other medical fabric.

5 34. A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the deformable or collapsible portion comprises a portion of the container at or adjacent to the first end of the container which is adapted to fold downwardly upon the container.

10 35. A method for sterilizing an object comprising placing the object into a container, the container having an opening through which the object is inserted, the container having at least a portion which is adapted to be deformed or collapsed, closing the opening with a vapour permeable closure and placing the container in a sterilizing environment for sufficient time to sterilize the object.

15 36. A method as claimed in claim 35 using a container as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 33.

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37. A method as claimed in claim 35 or claim 36 wherein the object is removed from the container by collapsing or deforming the collapsible or deformable portion to thereby reduce an inner volume of the container and force the object to break open the vapour permeable closure and extend at least partly out of the container.